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It was voted to prepare the present index at the meeting of the A. O. U. held in Cambridge, in November, 1912. Dr. T. S. Palmer was appointed chairman with power to select the members of the Index Committee. "A few weeks later," as stated in the introduction, "a committee of 13 members was organized, with Professor W. W. Cooke as secretary, and at a meeting on February 7, 1913, plans were perfected and the work distributed." The aid of Dr. Dwight, Chairman of the original Index Committee, and of Dr. Richmond and Dr. Stone, editor of 'The Auk,' was secured in correcting the proof. The Committee eventually comprised 22 members, divided into three subcommittees, to each of which were assigned special features of the work. To Professor Cooke, the secretary of the committee, fell the work of preparing the copy for the press. The manuscript was in the hands of the editor in April, 1914, but through delays in printing and proofreading the issue of the work was delayed till early in 1915. The Index Committee has thus made a good record for promptness and efficiency in its difficult task.—J. A. A.

The New B. O. U. List.¹—After a lapse of thirty-two years we have a second edition of the official list of British birds. It is well conceived, well carried out in detail and well printed. Full headings to all higher groups are given as in the A. O. U. Check-List, which is an improvement over the recent 'Hand-List' of Dr. Hartert and his associates. In the case of generic headings the reference and type are always given while the etymology and origin of all scientific names are explained. The synonymy under each species consists of references to the original place of publication, the first edition of the B. O. U. List, the 'Catalogue of Birds of the British Museum', and Saunders' 'Manual' 2nd edition; or in the case of recent additions to the first record of the bird in the British Isles. There is then a paragraph on 'Distribution in the British Islands' and 'General Distribution.' The data on Migration are not so full as in the 'Hand-List' nor are they given a separate paragraph. When subspecies are recognized the so called typical race is given binomially without the duplication of the specific name and the trinomials are printed in smaller type, following exactly the style of the original A. O. U. Check-List, a much less consistent plan than that of the last edition of this work or of the British 'Hand-List.'

In the introduction, beside the rules which governed the Committee's labors there is a 'Summary of British Birds according to their Status,' in which there are listed 141 Residents, 47 Summer Visitors, 46 Winter Visitors, 30 Birds of Passage, 61 Occasional Visitors, 149 Rare Visitors and 1 Extinct Species; total 475, an increase of 99 over the first edition. There are three appendices; (1), a hypothetical list; (2), a list of "nomina conservanda"; and

¹ A List | of | British Birds | Compiled by a Committee | of the | British Ornithologists' Union | *vignette* | Second and Revised Edition | Published by the | British Ornithologists' Union | and sold by | William Weesly & Son, 28 Essex Street, Strand, | London, W. C. | 1915. 8vo, pp. i-xxii + 1-430. Price, 7s. 6d.

(3), a discussion of nomenclatural matters and types of the genera. Such is the plan of the work which, except in the one point mentioned above, seems admirable.

It is of course the questions of classification and nomenclature that interest us most in a check-list. As to the former the Committee has adopted the system of 'Sharpe's 'Hand-List of Birds', reversing the order so as to begin with the Crows, which brings the work nearly in accord with the 'Hand-List' of Hartert *et al.* In matters of nomenclature: (1) the tenth edition of Linnæus has been accepted as a starting point instead of the twelfth; (2) tautonyms have been allowed; (3) trinomials have been adopted; (4) the fixation of a type for each genus according to the rules of the International Commission is recognized as a necessity. After having adopted such astounding changes from the antiquated policies that have heretofore governed the B. O. U., we feel like forgiving the Committee for the little list of thirteen *nomina conservanda* which the members refuse to relinquish, and the emendations which they feel must be made in the spelling of a few names! The advanced stand that is taken by the new B. O. U. List is certainly creditable to all concerned and makes a great stride towards that ultimate goal of uniformity for which so many of us have been striving.

Comparing the present work with the original 1883 edition we find 92 changes in specific and 51 in generic names; and yet the 'Hand-List' of Hartert *et al.*, which seemed to some so impossible, contained only 111 specific changes and 72 generic!

Comparing the new list with the latter we find only 86 differences, nearly half of which are questions of the limits of genera or of the specific or sub-specific rank of certain forms. Thirty cases depend upon dates of publication and the recognizability of early diagnoses or the acceptance of certain authors—as Vroeg and Oken; six hinge on whether names are sufficiently different in form to be recognized as distinct and then there are the thirteen *nomina conservanda*. Practically all of these differences can readily be settled by convention, as there is really no longer any principle at stake.

Comparing the new list with that of the A. O. U., we find less discrepancy in the matter of genera than was the case with the British 'Hand-List'. Thirteen genera of the A. O. U. list rejected by Hartert and his associates are here recognized, but many others are not regarded as separable, as *Nannus*, *Acanthopneuste*, *Planesticus*, *Archibuteo*, *Chaulelasmus*, *Nettion*, *Charitonetta*, *Olor*, *Actitis*, *Helodromas*, *Oxyechus*, *Pelidna*, *Erolia*, *Lobipes*, *Ionornis* and *Herodias*. *Hierofalco* on the other hand is recognized as distinct.

The A. O. U. use of *Hirundo* is endorsed, but the use of *Bombycilla* for the Waxwings is avoided by an argument that really has no basis except on the ground of a *nomen conservandum*. *Flammea* is used for the Barn Owl, both *Aluco* and *Tyto* being preoccupied and so also with *Polysticta* for Steller's Eider, which is supplanted by *Heniconetta*.

The name *rusticolus* for the Gyrfalcon is rejected in place of *gyrfalco* and

the two races appearing under these names in the A. O. U. list are united, while two races of *islandus* are recognized from Greenland.

The use of *Colymbus* for the Loons and *Aenanthe* for the Wheatear is correct as already stated in these columns and must be followed by the A. O. U. Committee.

It is matter for general congratulation that three Committees, working independently, have been able to come to such close agreement on all matters covered by the International Code of Nomenclature, and the differences that still remain emphasize the fact that it is no longer questions of nomenclature but of taxonomy that cause diversity in names.

The Committee of the B. O. U. deserve to be congratulated upon the excellent piece of work that they have accomplished and, with the exception of the unfortunate thirteen *nomina conservanda*, we can heartily recommend the nomenclature of the new list to all who write on British birds.—W. S.

Hankin on Animal Flight.¹—No ornithological problem has caused so much speculation, even from the earliest times, as the soaring bird; to quote Sir Guilford Molesworth, although “many theories have been advanced . . . they have all been miserably insufficient”; while even Lord Kelvin admits: “That which puzzled Solomon puzzles me also.” Practically everyone who has written on the matter has had a theory and the literature of the subject as a whole may be said to consist of a maximum of explanation with a minimum of observation. It is therefore a gratification to find a work that is almost exclusively devoted to observation, such as Dr. Hankin has produced,—observations moreover of the most detailed and careful kind which constitute one of the most valuable contributions to the subject of flight which has ever appeared.

The need of such a record of observation is recognized by the author who says by way of introduction: “Those best qualified to form an opinion have as a rule had little or no opportunity of studying the facts at first hand. Such authorities have, in some cases, published accounts of soaring flight which have consisted entirely of explanation. Others have related a few facts with more or less tentative explanations. The present book will be found to contain the facts of the case with no explanation at all.”

Dr. Hankin's observations were carried on mainly at Agra, India, where the opportunities for the study of soaring flight — always best seen in the tropics — were excellent. His records show that there is a definite time each day when soaring becomes possible, which is earlier as the season advances. The presence of either wind or sunshine is an absolute necessity

¹ *Animal Flight. | A Record of Observation. | By | E. H. Hankin, M. A., Sc.D. | Late Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, | Honorary Fellow of Allahabad University, | Chemical Examiner and Bacteriologist to | the Government of the United Provinces | and of the Central Provinces, India, Associate Fellow of the Aeronautical Society of | Great Britain. | (First Edition) | London: | Iliffe & Sons Ltd., 20, Tudor Street, E. C. | [1913?] | Svo. pp. 1-405 + Index unpagged. Price, 12s. 6d.*